

Rocky Mountain Express

Where preserving railroading in the Rocky Mountain States begins and will never end.

January 2015

Rocky Mountain Railroad Heritage Society

Volume 2015, Issue 1

A LOOK AT RAILROAD BRIDGES - RESTORED, REBUILT, OR RELIC

Cumbres & Toltec Scenic RR Lobato Bridge: Restored

The Lobato Bridge spans Wolf Creek and, as part of the San Juan Extension of the former Denver & Rio Grande RR, helped open the region to mining and agriculture.



Photo from R L Dorman collection, FoC&TSR^o

Building the section between Antonito (CO) and Chama (NM) "was a formidable task." It entailed constructing two large bridges, two tunnels, and crossing over 10,015 foot high Cumbres Pass.

The San Juan Extension between Alamosa and Silverton continued in operation until the mid-1960's. Abandonment came on December 29, 1969. Six months later, the states of Colorado and New Mexico purchased the line and right-of-way, rolling stock, and real property between Antonito and Chama.

Lobato Bridge, the smaller of the two bridges, is 310' in length with five 54' spans and one 40' span. It is supported on stone-masonry abutments as much as 100 feet above the ground. Fabricated in 1883 of wrought iron by the Carnegie's Keystone Bridge Company, it had withstood 120 years of use until the night of June 23, 2010.

During that June night, a fire broke out; the next morning it was found that the bridge was severely damaged. The cause was not clear. Westerly winds contributed to greater damage to the east end of the bridge.

Investigation, which included thorough assessment of the extent of the damage and analytical modeling, planning, and design took the better part of one year. Construction was completed in approximately one month in the Spring of 2011.

Source: 45:1, 2014 *APT Bulletin*^{oo}

Georgetown Loop Railroad "Devil's Gate" High Bridge: Rebuilt



Mike Walker photo^o

West of Georgetown, the Clear Creek Valley narrows and rises 638 feet in less than two miles. UP chief engineer Jacob Blickensderfer ultimately proposed a "corkscrew" route which included three hairpin turns, a 30-degree horseshoe curve, and four bridges across Clear Creek, one being the massive Devil's Gate High Bridge.

Construction on the high bridge began in October 1883 and was completed in January 1884. The first locomotive to operate over the Georgetown Loop arrived in Silver Plume on March 31, 1884, beginning a large tourist boom. Throughout the 1880s and into the early 1900s, traffic was high. But freight traffic slowed once the mining boom died, and passenger traffic declined with the growing popularity of the automobile. Operations ceased in 1938, and the line was formally abandoned on January 30, 1939. The high bridge was torn down in June 1939.

In 1959, the Colorado Historical Society developed a plan to reconstruct the entire length of the Georgetown Loop. Construction began in 1973, continuing over the next four years. Tracks and ties were donated by the UP RR; former D&RGW narrow gauge rolling stock was donated. "Seabees" graded rail beds, laid track, and installed bridges. Fortunately, large grants to rebuild the high bridge were awarded, including \$1 million from the Boettcher Foundation.

Work on the high bridge began in June 1983, the last span was bolted down on September 25th, and ties and track were laid across the bridge by May 1984. June 9th saw the first revenue run across the bridge. The remaining mile into Georgetown was dedicated on August 1, 1984 - the reconstructed railroad had reached its end of track.

Sources: Gary Morgan's *The Georgetown Loop* and the CHS's *The Georgetown Loop*

Chicago Rock Island & Pacific RR Matheson Bridge: Now a Relic

The Rock Island system dates to 1847. From 1880 to 1902, it extended its lines into more sparsely settled regions in Colorado, Nebraska, and Kansas.

The railroad built through this area in 1886. Originating in Chicago, the line split in two when it reached Limon (CO): one branch went northwest to Denver and the other southwest to Colorado Springs.

The town of Matheson was named after Duncan Matheson, a noted pioneer in Elbert County. Having been a stop on the Smoky Hill Trail, it was older than the other nearby railroad towns of Simla, Ramah, Calhan, Peyton, and Falcon.



Sigi Walker photo

Today, the Matheson Bridge still stands over Big Sandy Creek, the bridge to nowhere. All track has been removed between Limon and Colorado Springs, while the track to Denver is still used by the Union Pacific RR. In the early 1950s, the old Matheson depot and large water tank were removed, while a small station converted from a baggage building was sold in 1965 and located on a farm south of town.

The Matheson Bridge can be seen on the east side of town looking north from US Hwy 24. It is located on private property and is accessible only with the owner's permission.

Located at an elevation of 5787 feet, it is a 2-span thru truss bridge, each span 153' 7" in length, using concrete masonry for the abutments and piers. It was built in 1902, replacing earlier pile trestles that regularly washed out. Two spans of the dismantled Rock River Bridge near Corona, IL, were used in the construction of this bridge. The other spans from the Rock River Bridge have all since been scrapped.

Source: 2005 RITS convention handout

Rocky Mountain Railroad Heritage Society
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Historic D&RG Depot in CO Springs for lease

Newsletter Volunteer Staff
Editor: Sigi Walker
Photographer: Mike Walker

Note: All submissions may be edited for content, grammar, and space allocation, and become the property of the Rocky Mountain Railroad Heritage Society unless other arrangements have been made. Digital text submissions in .doc or .docx; photos in jpg, please. Submit articles and photos to the following address.

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RMRHS has applied for Federal 501(c)(3) status.



Colorado Springs' Historic AT&SF RR Passenger Depot, built in 1917 and closed in 1938, has been sold to The O'Neil Group Company. Slated to open in summer of 2015, the plan is to create an innovation district in the downtown area.

Contributors to this edition:
Jim Jordan
Mike and Sigi Walker

PRESIDENT'S LETTER TO THE MEMBERSHIP:

With much appreciation, Jim

SAN LUIS VALLEY SOUTHERN RAILWAY TRESTLE

County Road 12, Blanca vicinity, Costilla County
National Register 1/6/2004, 5CT.398

The Costilla Estates Development Company, a business organized to sell lands within the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant, built the 32-mile San Luis Valley Southern Railway. This trestle, an excellent example of timber stringer standard gauge railroad bridge construction, was built in 1910 and carried freight and passenger service until 1939. It is the only remaining SLVS trestle.

San Luis Valley Southern Railway Trestle, 2002



This is a reminder that if you have not renewed your Rocky Mountain Railroad Heritage Society membership, a renewal form can be mailed to you by calling 303-269-9768.

Please ✕
or provide the information requested on a plain sheet of paper and mail with payment.

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PO Box 969, Englewood CO 80151-0969

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Please enclose check (no cash) made payable to:
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Date: _____ Venue: _____

Summary of Historic Depots and Buildings RMRHS is working to preserve in 2015

Grand Junction Depot

National Register 9/8/1992 (5ME.4163); State Register 5/14/1997 (5BN.415)

Designed by famed Chicago architect Henry J. Schlacks and constructed in 1906 by the William Simpson Construction Company, this two-story white brick depot, with fine terra cotta detailing, features elements of the Italian Renaissance style. The depot contributed to the development of the western portion of the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad system as well as to the growth of Grand Junction.



Left: Denver Public Library image #HC852 DPLW: Well dressed men, women, and children crowd the dock at the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad depot in Grand Junction, Colorado. The brick and stone building has arched windows, a curving entry, and an ornate lamp. Passenger coaches are to the side.

Right: Trackside view of Grand Junction Depot in July 2014. The fenced area is used by a zipline hardware manufacturer. The depot is privately-owned and is for sale.



Current photos by Mike Walker

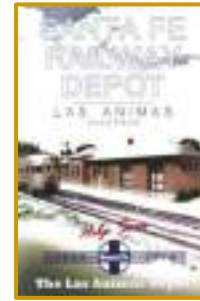
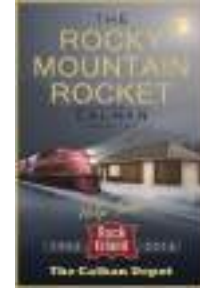
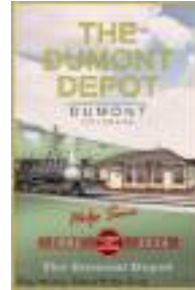
The Grand Junction Depot opened on September 18, 1906, the same day the great earthquake struck San Francisco. Refugees from the quake arriving in Grand Junction were provided food, clothing, and cots by volunteers while physicians attended to the ill and injured.

"A credit to a city five times as large" as Grand Junction, the depot featured a glass passenger canopy, large arched stained-glass windows, and an interior with 22-foot ceilings, solid oak trim, and plaster pilasters - "a splendid railroad building." Some time before 1930, the waiting room was converted to two levels in order to accommodate offices on the second floor. When subsequently removed, "vicious" scars were left on the original plaster details.

After the heyday of train travel passed, the depot fell into disrepair; the last ticket was issued in the 1980's. The building fell into foreclosure and was purchased in October 2011 by a Texas buyer for \$188,376. It has again been placed on the market.

A preservation group, Friends of the Grand Junction Depot, has placed rain spouts on the exterior, boxes over the air-conditioning, installed doors, and treated windows to keep the building from deteriorating further.

Status: Serious meetings to develop plans to preserve Grand Junction's "finest depot of its kind in the West" are in progress. A meeting has been scheduled for 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, January 22, 2015, in a place tbd.



Brighton Great Western Rwy scale and freight house: The land on which this building sits will soon have a new owner. The RMRHS may be given the building, along with some rail and switch stands.

Calhan Depot: Structure evaluation has been completed. Awaiting notification of grant request approval.

Castle Rock Santa Fe Depot: The building has been boarded up to protect it from further deterioration. It may be moved in the future.

Como Depot: Don't forget to mark your calendar for August 22, 2015, the grand opening and dedication of the depot to be held in conjunction with the 20th annual Boreas Pass Railroad Days.

Craig Depot: Awaiting approval for delay of the demolition, currently in the hands of UP's General Superintendent.

Dumont Depot: The Purchase Agreement for the depot building (not land) has been signed. The RMRHS now needs to raise \$10,000, after which the building will be donated to the Mill Creek Valley Historical Society and moved.

Hugo Union Pacific Roundhouse: The restoration of doors and windows is in progress. Future interior plans include a large dining hall, kitchen, visitor's center, and museum. Bay eight will be restored to resemble the original engine facility.

Kit Carson (CO) Pumphouse: Building donated to Kit Carson Historical Society but land is owned by the UPRR. Grant request from the state for an evaluation in progress. Need funding to move the building.

Las Animas Depot: Clean-up of the property by volunteers has been ongoing. Bent County and Las Animas have made numerous offers to purchase the building and the land.

Loveland Great Western Rwy Depot: OmniTrax has put the contract on hold although Granby and Dave Naples have signed it.

Midland Depot at Divide: Grant applications are in progress to fund the next phase of the restoration. The building has been raised and leveled, and a permanent foundation is in place.

Trinchere Freight House (now a museum): No update to report.

**Train Treks with Mike and Sigi Walker:
Laramie and Cheyenne, Wyoming**

In February 2013 we were in Laramie, WY, for the screening of the Wyoming PBS film "End of Track." By the time the 7:00 p.m. program began, about a foot of snow had fallen. Still, the Laramie Railroad Depot was filled to capacity. And it was most fitting that outside the depot, on display in Laramie Heritage Park, was the "Snow Train," consisting of a wedge snowplow, UP steam locomotive, six-man bunk car, and caboose.



Larry Ostresh photo

Before the event, the depot, restored and maintained by the Laramie Railroad Depot Association, had been given a thorough cleaning; it was gleaming. The Laramie Railroad Depot was built in 1924 to replace the town's original Union Pacific Depot/Hotel that was destroyed by fire in 1917. It served



Larry Ostresh photo

as Laramie's Union Pacific passenger depot until 1971 and as an Amtrak depot until 1983. In 1985, the UPRR gave the Depot to the Laramie Plains Museum, which in 2009 transferred ownership to the Laramie Railroad Depot Association. It houses a small museum of railroad memorabilia and is used for special events. The Depot is the only remaining building left from the once large Union Pacific presence in Laramie and was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1988. The railroad is the reason for the City's original existence, and the Depot is an important part of Laramie's historic legacy.



Mike Walker photo

In May of 2014, the Union Pacific Railroad was moving Big Boy 4014 from its longtime display site in Pomona, CA, to Cheyenne. A

stop for the night was made in Laramie, and the next day the Laramie Railroad Depot was once again alive with local residents, numerous railfans, and photographers.

The final stop for Big Boy 4014 was the UP's Cheyenne Steam Shops where it would be restored to operating condition. The 4014 was chosen from a field of eight existing Big Boys because it was in the best condition. It had been oiled and tended to by the members of the Southern California Chapter, R&LHS, for over 50 years. The climate in Pomona was also in its favor.

Two weeks after 4014's arrival, we returned to Cheyenne for Depot Days. The event is held annually the third weekend in May at the Cheyenne Union Depot and includes shuttles to the UP Steam Shops, Yards, and Roundhouse. We were able to get "up close and personal" with the 4014 as well as the UP 844 while in the Steam Shop.



Tom VanWormer photo^o

The trans-continental railroad, "the first large-scale, federally sanctioned construction in the aftermath of the Civil War," connected the United States from coast to coast. Passing through Cheyenne, the city gained a cultural and economic relevance it would not otherwise have achieved.



Website view of Cheyenne Union Depot^o alongside main UP yards in historic downtown^o

Henry Van Brunt built the Cheyenne Depot in 1886; it offered an architectural spectacle never before seen in the state and became a centerpiece for the city. Patterned after the buildings of Henry Richardson, the depot is considered "one of the best articulated examples of the Richardsonian Romanesque style in the West." Now a National Historic Landmark, it houses a museum with an extensive collection of photographs, artifacts, and interactive exhibits, Harry Brunk's narrow gauge model railroad, a train view area, and a railroad art collection. Shadow's Bar and Grille is located in the east end of the depot.

QUESTION: Where was the last spike for the first true transcontinental railroad in the U.S. driven?

ANSWER: It may surprise you that it is in the town of Strasburg, Colorado!

In 1870, the Kansas Pacific Railroad drove the last spike completing the first continuous chain of rails from the Atlantic to the Pacific Coast at a place then known as Comanche Crossing.

The Comanche Crossing Museum includes four fully restored buildings, three of which are of interest to rail historians: the homestead house of a one-time railroad employee, the Strasburg depot, and a Union Pacific caboose.

The KP used a boxcar for a depot at Strasburg until 1917, when a combination depot was finally built. It has been fully restored by volunteers at the museum.



museum website photo^o

Strasburg also offers several other interesting railroad-related activities. The Comanche Crossing & Eastern RR is a 15-inch gauge non-commercial railroad, a hobby project of the Uhrich and Thain families. It has grown to more than a mile of track, crossing three trestles and fills over 10' high.



Mike Walker photos^o

Interestingly, the Thain family home was once the Rock Island Railroad depot at Simla CO, moved to its present site in 1974.

Uhrich Locomotive Works began as the Virgil Uhrich Shop in 1948, **the** place to go for equipment repair and welding. By 1963, the business included machine and fabricating shops, a foundry, and a 15-inch gauge shop railroad. Today, it produces machined parts and castings for tourist railroads and railcars and engines in 15-inch and 30-inch gauge.

